

New Hampshire Special Education Onsite Evaluation Report

SAU #14

Robert Bell, Superintendent

Final Report

Evaluation Conducted on: November 25-26, 1996

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New Hampshire Special Education Onsite Evaluation Report

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(Commendations, Citations, and Suggestions for each school)

Note: *It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.*

New Hampshire Special Education Onsite Evaluation Report

SAU # 14

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Special Education On-Site Evaluation was conducted at SAU #14 comprised of the following schools: Epping Elementary School, Epping Middle/High School, Ellis School and Chester Elementary School. The on-site team met on November 25-26, 1996 in order to review the status of Special Education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of Special Education Staff, analyzing of SPEDIS data, and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the Special Education Director, building principals, regular and special education teachers and related service personnel, as time and availability permitted. Throughout the visit the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report which you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of your on-site team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no exceptions to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE:

Based on review of the previous on-site report, as well as review of application materials submitted for the 1996 on-site and visitations to each of the schools, the team determined that SAU #14 is working hard to provide quality programming to students in the least restrictive environment. The on-site team agreed that the SAU has made many program improvements since the 1992 visit, but were sometimes lacking paperwork documentation confirming this. As reflected in the file reviews, there are still some "housekeeping" types of errors and oversights in compliance and the on-site team found that procedures are being followed to varying degrees throughout the different schools. While there is evidence that the special education process and procedure is becoming stronger, there needs to be continued inservice training and on-going monitoring of record keeping and the special process in each building.

Upon visiting each school, the team determined that case managers are working hard to ensure that the referral and evaluation process, IEP development, and operation of programs are implemented as outlined in the state standards, and for the most part the SAU has made progress in all of these areas. Citations still in process of being addressed include documentation of appropriate team composition, a continued need to ensure that the entire special education process from referral to evaluation and identification is more closely monitored and documented, and that student records are current and complete. It was noted that there has been an increase in the amount of time that the school psychologist spends in the SAU which has resulted in significant progress in making certain that evaluations are conducted as outlined in the state standards. Upon further review of student records it was noted that consideration of extended school year programming is almost always documented as well as evidence that determination of the least restrictive environment is done on an annual basis. There continues to be inconsistent documentation of summary reports and observations as outlined in the state standards and the visiting team could not always determine if evaluation/placement and IEP teams were appropriately composed. Another area that continues to warrant attention is that of special education curriculum for those programs/classes that are not a modification of the regular curriculum. This citation is in process of being addressed as information is currently being gathered so that the curriculum can be completed.

Overall, it can be said that SAU #14 has made progress in resolving the areas of non-compliance that were noted in the previous on-site and staff are recognized for their efforts.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

SAU #14 has made some major changes in programming since the 1992 on-site. The team was favorably impressed with the skilled and dedicated staff and the efforts that are being made to implement inclusionary programming for special education students. At the elementary schools, what the team saw was a variety of programming being made available to students with emphasis being placed on providing services in the least restrictive environment. There appears to be emphasis on effectively meeting the needs of children within the regular education setting through appropriate program modifications, utilization of the consultation model and collaboration between regular and special education teachers. The staff and administrators at all of the elementary schools appear to have the expertise and enthusiasm to successfully provide services through the inclusion model and they are encouraged to continue moving in this direction.

At the middle/high school level it was the opinion of the team that there is a need for improved interface and communication between administration, regular, and special education staff. Unfortunately there does not appear to be an open line of communication and full cooperation among the individuals who work in the building which creates a problem in the delivery of services. In visiting classrooms, interviewing staff and reviewing student records, it became evident that there is no clear understanding of inclusion and that special educators and regular educators need to work more collaboratively to provide curricula that reflects modifications/adaptations to meet the needs of students. There is no sense of teamwork in the building nor any link between regular and special education. At this time there are praiseworthy things happening within individual classrooms at the middle/high school and staff are strongly encouraged to work together and collaborate in the provision of services for all children. The second issue that surfaced at the high school level was the need for improved transition planning for educationally disabled students and that IEP's reflect transition components as outlined in the NH State Standards. The on-site team suggests that there be more inservice training made available to staff and administration regarding transition planning and the writing of transition plans on IEP's.

As in the past, another concern raised by the team was oversight of the special education process in each of the schools. Although progress in most buildings is evident, procedures are still being followed to varying degrees throughout the different schools. Consistency and strict adherence to requirements should be a major goal in each school. The SAU needs to develop established guidelines for the identification of educationally disabled students with evidence of team decision making with regard to individual students. Closely related to this is the continued need to ensure that staff are provided with adequate training and support in regards to the special education "process" from definition to implementation of services. With the high staff turn over, it is necessary to have a procedures manual in place as well as annual training and support/coaching/mentoring for all new faculty. While there is evidence that some progress had been made in these areas, a systematic approach to implementation of the "process" is still in need of attention.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

SAU WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- At the elementary school level staff are enthusiastic and supportive of implementation on inclusionary practices.
- Within the elementary schools there is an atmosphere that encourages student achievement and success for all children and the staff work well as a team.
- Parents throughout the SAU appear involved, supportive and satisfied with the special education services that their children receive.
- The director of special education is knowledgeable and willing to be involved all aspects of programming.
- The SAU has made a genuine effort to resolve issues of non-compliance listed in previous on-sites.
- The application materials submitted for the 1996 on-site visitation were comprehensive and well organized.
- The instructional staff throughout the SAU were described as knowledgeable and caring.
- The SAU does an outstanding job in the monitoring and entering of SPEDIS data.

CITATIONS:

Ed #1119.04 (C) For programming that is not a modification of the regular education curriculum, (i.e. life skills, pre-vocational, communication skills) there needs to be a curriculum developed. The IEP cannot serve as the curriculum.

Ed #1107.02 (A-G) Throughout the SAU there has been improved refinement of the special education process, yet there were still oversights and omissions in documentation.

Ed #1109.03 (B,C,D) Upon review of student records in each of the schools, the on-site team could not always
Ed #1115.03 (A-G) determine appropriate team composition at IEP and Placement team meetings

Ed #1107.05(C) At the time of the on-site visitation the SAU had only one staff member who held an MR
Ed #1107.03(A,F) endorsement, the middle/high school had no individuals endorsed in EH, Chester Elementary
Ed #1107.07 (C,1) had no staff endorsed in EH and Ellis School had no staff endorsed in EH or LD. In order for
evaluation teams to have appropriate composition, there must be a teacher certified in the area of
disability present, or a plan in place to provide appropriately credentialed staff as team members.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The SAU might want to consider developing a special education process and procedures manual for all staff, which could include standardized forms, referral process and evaluation procedure, and operation of programs. This document could be used as a reference for teachers who are new to the district. This manual should be accompanied by training and updates at the start of each school year.
- There needs to be continued awareness building and inservice training in every aspect of special education, best practices, instructional strategies, adapting and modifying curriculum and how to meet the needs of all students in the least restrictive environment.
- The on-site team suggests that more inservice training be made available to teachers in the writing of strong and measurable IEP's that reflect the local curriculum and NH State Frameworks.

OUT-OF-DISTRICT

Program(s) Visited:

SPEDIS # of Files Reviewed: 1) 508123 2) 536091 3) 430744

Commendations :

- The special education director maintains an open line of communication with out-of-district placements.
- Students placed out-of-district appear to be making progress in their programs.

Citations:

Ed #1111.01 1 file: Had no evidence that extended school year had been considered.

Ed #1125.03 1 file: Had no evidence of Written Prior Notice.

Ed #1125.04

Ed #1109.01(j) 1 file: Had no indication of service providers responsibility for implementing the IEP.

Ed #1107.02(d) 1 file: No record of medical evaluation for student identified as other health impaired. The permission to evaluate was also missing. In the same file there was no current written summary report.

Ed #1109.01(g,h) 1 file: One IEP had no projected dates and duration of services and the length of school year was not filled in.

Suggestions: None

EPHING ELEMENTARY

Program(s) Visited: Elementary, Inclusionary, Preschool

SPEDIS # of Files Reviewed: 1) 551353 2) 551315 3) 546756

Commendations :

- The staff work well together as a team.
- Facilities for related services are great!
- Regular education staff takes a great deal of shared ownership for special education students. Some staff have highly specialized training.
- Disabled children appear fully included in regular class activities.
- Strong and supportive administration is evident.

Citations :

Ed #1107.02(d) 1 file: No date on written notice of IEP meeting.
Ed #1109.04

Ed #1107.03(a) 1 file: No LEA representative on evaluation team.

Ed #1125.04(a1-6) 1 file: No permission to test and therefore no documentation of testing completed within 45 days.
Ed #1107.05(k)

Ed #1115.06 1 file: No evidence that LRE is determined annually.

Ed #1109.01(c-d) 1 file: IEP did not reflect extent of participation in regular classes or expectation.

Suggestions :

- Date all documentation, reports, etc.
- Be sure to notify parents of referral meeting and invite them.
- Files could be better organized - all meeting minutes might be in one folder - evaluation summary page could be with WPN and minutes and invitations, etc.

CHESTER ELEMENTARY

Program(s) Visited: Speech Pathology, Resource, Regular Education

SPEDIS # of Files Reviewed: 1) 508119 2) 545127 3) 533496

Commendations :

- Files are extremely well organized.
- Gains have been made in compliance issues noted at last on-site.
- Principal is extremely supportive of staff.
- A great deal of in-class service delivery is being accomplished.
- Great strides have been made in involving parents in the school

Citations :

Ed #1107.08(c) 2 files: No evidence of observation.

Ed #1107.03(a) 1 file: Evaluation team meeting did not have speech pathologist or regular classroom teacher present for LD/Speech-Language identification.

Ed #1109.03(a-d) 1 file: Had only two signatures of people present at IEP meeting.

Ed #1111.01 1 file: No evidence of discussion of extended year program.

Suggestions :

- Lack of physical space impacts the programming of students with behavioral issues. Space is needed for meetings, remediation, testing, and consultation.
- Workshops are being planned for December/January for regular class teachers regarding modifications and strategies. These training sessions are critical in order for inclusionary practices to be successful.
- More computers are needed for both Special Education instruction and paperwork.
- The amount of time needed to consult and case manage with Pinkerton Academy puts strain on current personnel. Additional staff would reduce this burden.

ELLIS PRESCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Preschool/Grades 1-6

SPEDIS # of Files Reviewed: 1) 551313 2) 568244 3) 542922 4) 054025

Commendations :

- Experience of team members is an asset to the school.
- Assessment reports are well-written.
- Staff is very child-oriented and knowledgeable.
- Grades 1-3 coordinator is very organized and knowledgeable of special education procedure.
- Team communication is evident.

Citations:

<u>Ed #1107.02(b)</u>	No evidence of referral, oral or written, and no documentation of referral with parent invitation.
<u>Ed #1107.02(d)</u>	No documentation of Written Prior Notice of referral disposition to parent.
<u>Ed #1107.02(g)</u>	2 files: No written consent to evaluate.
<u>Ed #1107.05(k)</u>	2 files: No evidence of completion of testing within 45 days, nor extension signed by parent.
<u>Ed #1107.07</u>	1 file: No evidence of LEA representative at meeting.
<u>Ed #1107.07(c)</u>	1 file: No certified EH person on the team.
<u>Ed #1107.08(a)</u>	1 file: No regular teacher on team.
<u>Ed #1109.01(a,b)</u>	2 files: The current IEP did not include present levels of performance nor annual goals and short term objectives.
<u>Ed #1107.03(a)</u>	No EH certified or LEA representative at evaluation meeting.
<u>Ed #1107.06(a)</u>	1 file: Evaluation summary report not dated - unable to document.
<u>Ed #1115.03(b)</u>	1 file: Team membership had no EH certified individual.
<u>Ed #1125.03(d1,2)</u>	2 files: WPN does not state which evaluations were used - no names, dates.
<u>Ed #1115.06(a-c)</u>	No evidence of LRE being considered annually.
<u>Ed #1109.01(c-d)</u>	1 file: Did not indicate extent to which student participated in regular class.
<u>Ed #1109.04(a-d)</u>	2 files: No evidence of 10 day notice provided to parent for IEP meeting.
<u>Ed #1109.03(c)</u>	2 files: No evidence that EH certified person included on team.
<u>Ed #1113.02 (a-b)</u>	1 file: Vocational component incomplete.
<u>Ed #1102.35(a-d)</u>	Transition component does not meet requirements outlined in standards.

Suggestions: None

EPPING MIDDLE SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Special Education/Regular Education

SPEDIS # of Files Reviewed: 1) 527612 2) 508046 3) 053919

Commendations:

- Learning Lab models seem to be effective for students and manageable for special education teachers.
- Special education staff is very enthusiastic about students.
- Kids are reportedly happy to be in school.
- Classroom teachers (interviewed) seemed upbeat and eager to work with special education staff.

Citations:

<u>Ed #1107.03(i)</u>	2 files: Three year evaluation was missing from student record.
<u>Ed #1107.05(k)</u>	1 file: Missing education evaluation; could not determine if process was completed within 45 days.
<u>Ed #1107.07(c)</u>	Evaluation team not identified as evaluation is missing from file; unable to determine appropriate team composition. 1 file: Had no teacher certified in area of disability (MR).
<u>Ed #1109.11(a)</u>	1 file: Contains proof of annual IEP meetings, but has no evidence of regular monitoring of IEP.
<u>Ed #1103.(a)</u>	1 file: MR student file had no MR certified team member.
<u>Ed #1115.03</u>	1 file: Team membership did not include teacher certified in area of disability. (MR)
<u>Ed #1107.08(d)</u>	1 file: School Psychologist never signed written summary reports.
<u>Ed #1109.01(f-h)</u>	1 file: Spaces provided on computer-generated IEP's for these to be filled out, but they were blank.
<u>Ed #1111.01</u>	1 file: No evidence that IEP E.Y.P was considered.

Suggestions:

- Develop a format to provide evidence that resource room services, counseling services, etc. are actually being delivered. Improved monitoring of IEP's is suggested.
- Special education teachers need individual training in the use of all forms and the special education process.
- Special education teachers need improved access to computers to complete required paperwork, etc.
- Change organization of files to provide clearer flow of paperwork monitoring process.
- Provide training for all staff in special needs, IEP writing, inclusionary practices, etc.
- Provide a forum for mediation of issues between "regular education", "special education" and "administration."
- Provide consistent, intensive, experienced support to special education teachers, particularly new teachers unfamiliar to the system.
- Explore Mentor Program for special education personnel.
- Support special education program in budget to provide manipulative, computer programs, alternative curriculum, etc.
- Require mandatory inservice training to regular education teachers to encourage modifications, team work, etc.
- Develop a "mock file" to demonstrate what a compliant file looks like.
- Administration at Middle/High School should attend IEP meetings and other team meetings to gain a better understanding of the special education program and student's needs.

EPHING HIGH SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Modified Program, Resource Room, Economics Class

SPEDIS # of Files Reviewed: 1) 551294 2) 053917 3) 551333

Commendations:

- Regular education teachers seemed motivated and creative.
- Student behavior observed during visit was good.
- Regular education teachers were committed to assisting the special education students and ensuring their success.
- Guidance department is sensitive in dealing with special education students.

Citations:

<u>Ed #1107.02(i)</u>	1 file: No notice sent to parents upon referral.
<u>Ed #1107.03(a)</u>	No EH certified teacher on team.
<u>Ed #1123.04(10)</u>	No record of disclosure found.
<u>Ed #1113.01(a-c)</u>	Vocational evaluation not on file.
<u>Ed #1115.03(b)</u>	No EH teacher on placement team.
<u>Ed #1109.01(c-d)</u>	2 files: Regular class participation expectations are not clearly documented.
<u>Ed #1109.01(k)</u>	2 files: No transition component and staff administration, when interviewed, did not have a clear understanding of transition planning and requirements outlined in state standards.
<u>Ed # 1107.07(c-3)</u>	1 file: LEA representative other than the teacher was not present.
<u>Ed #1109.4(a,d)</u>	(a) No evidence that the parent was given a 10 day notice (written) of the IEP meeting. (d) No transition meeting.
<u>Ed #1123.05</u>	1 file: No evidence that parents received Annual Notification of Rights.
<u>Ed #1123.04(a-7)</u>	1 file: No record of access.
<u>Ed #1123.06(a-3)</u>	In the front of the file the record of access is not up-to-date and it doesn't specify the purpose for which the party is authorized to release the records.
<u>Ed #1107.07(a-g)</u> <u>#1109.03(a-d)</u> <u>Ed #1115.01(a-b)</u>	Files reviewed at the middle/high school reflect one meeting held to determine disability, write <u>Ed</u> an IEP and make placement decision.
<u>Ed #1111.01</u>	1 file: No evidence of EYP discussion found.
<u>Ed #1119.11(b)</u>	Through staff interviews, it was determined that team meetings are not routinely called for suspensions of more than ten days.

EPPING HIGH SCHOOL (con't)

Suggestions:

- There is a great need for secretarial support in the special education department.
- Staff would like more support and knowledge in dealing with the EH population.
- Some staff would like more workshops on adapting/modifying curriculum.
- Separate meetings for evaluations, IEP and Placement need to be conducted.
- Opportunities for inservice procedural issues for staff regarding EH/behavior/attention should be mandatory.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU #14

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

SAU #14

The District reported that No Students enrolled in SAU #14 currently fall under the
James O' Consent Decree.